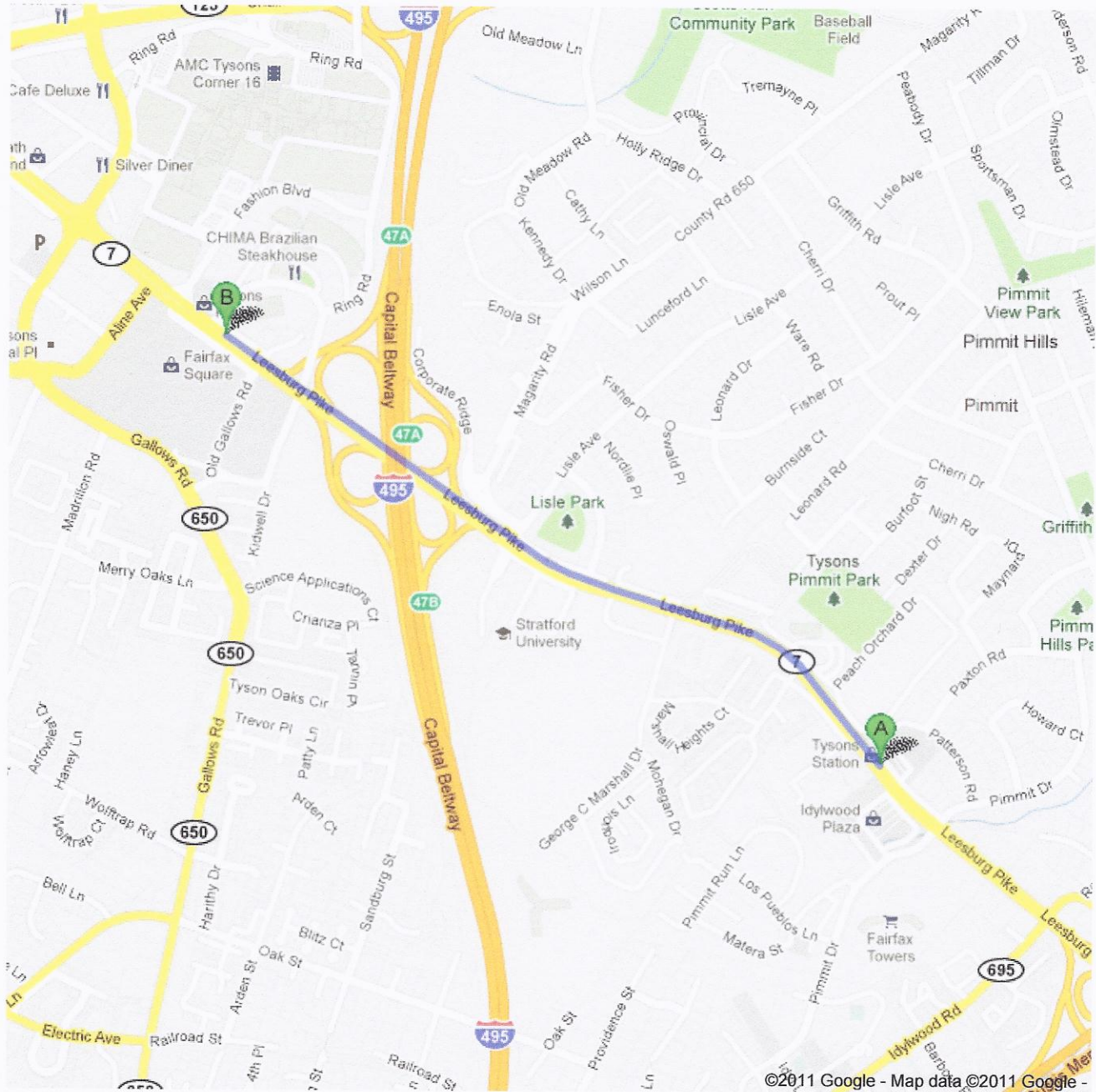




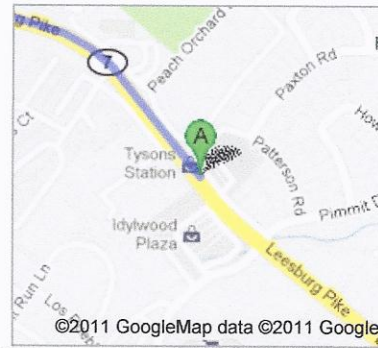
Directions to 8028 Leesburg Pike, Tysons  
Corner, VA 22182  
1.2 mi – about 2 mins



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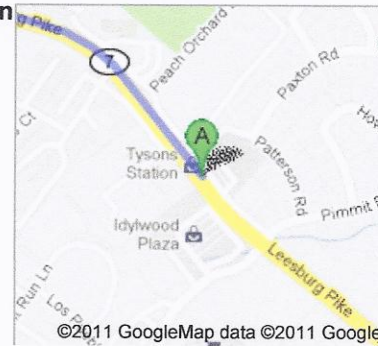
7520 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22043



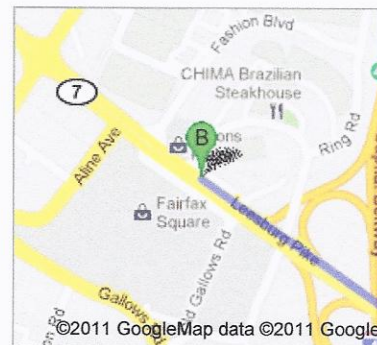
1. Head **northwest** on **Leesburg Pike** toward **Dominion Dr**

Destination will be on the right  
About 2 mins

go 1.2 mi  
total 1.2 mi



8028 Leesburg Pike, Tysons Corner, VA 22182



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# The Washington Post

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## Tysons Corner: The building of an American city

**By Jonathan O'Connell |, Published: September 24**

Imagine, it's a shivery January morning in 2014 and you are riding one of the first of Metro's Silver Line cars to Tysons Corner.

After you step aboard downtown, the train runs west out of the District and into Arlington County. It passes through the East Falls Church station, just as the Orange Line does, but then hangs a right away from the Dulles Toll Road and soars onto newly built tracks 50 feet in the air. It zips past the [Capital One](#) headquarters, rumbles over the icy Capital Beltway — check out the cars creeping along below! — and [passes the two shopping malls](#) and through two more stations before pulling onto the platform at Tysons West. It's about 40 minutes after you boarded.

As you step onto the platform five stories above Leesburg Pike, you look out over an area that [Fairfax County officials imagine](#) as a modern American city — a “walkable, sustainable, urban center.”

In other words, nothing like Tysons Corner circa 2011.



If all goes to plan by 2014, [a 400-unit apartment building](#) twice the height of buildings in downtown Washington is under construction beyond the tracks on one side. It's next to [an Exxon](#) station, a [McDonald's](#) and other single-use buildings surrounded by parking lots. Off the other direction, [a new Wal-Mart](#) sells fresh groceries. Still, when you get off one of those first trains, reaching either side requires shuffling along a pedestrian walkway above six lanes of traffic. And keep in mind that a "block" in Tysons can be a quarter-mile or more, lined with auto dealerships and strip malls. That next street is a long way off, and the only shopping you can expect to do between here and there is for a Honda or a Mercedes.

Tysons Corner today is unincorporated. It has no government of its own, and it didn't even have an associated Zip code until April.

And yet, there is much to make it the envy of major American cities.

Tysons has [26.7 million square feet of office space](#), more than the metropolitan areas of San Antonio or Jacksonville, Fla. Five Fortune 500 firms call it home.

With its two malls, Tysons draws crowds of shoppers from the Mid-Atlantic region. There is a Gucci store, Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus and Tiffany's. If you have a young daughter, you probably know that it has one of the country's 11 American Girl stores.

Care to dine at the Palm? Tysons has one. Want to stay at the Ritz-Carlton afterward? No problem.

But as the tiny rural crossroads has grown into one of the country's top corporate destinations, in one sense it's also become a monstrosity: It is teeming — just absolutely bursting — with traffic. Traffic that carries people from cookie-cutter strip malls to sprawling office parks and past acres of parking lots in between. For each of the 19,627 people who live in Tysons, more than four others drive there each day, which explains all those parking lots.

Enter Metro, which by way of more than \$6 billion worth of tracks and cars will connect Tysons with Washington on one end and [Dulles International Airport](#) on the other.

When [the funding was approved in 2008](#), Fairfax County seized on the opportunity to encourage an urban landscape. Real estate developers jumped onboard, submitting plans for more than 20 million square feet of buildings in Tysons. Now, county officials anticipate the number of residents to increase fivefold by 2050, to 100,000.

### **From a rural crossroads**

Tysons Corner "was a challenge to everything that I had been taught: that what this world needed was More Planning; that cars were inherently Evil and our attachment to them



Inexplicable,” Joel Garreau, who was a longtime reporter and editor for The Washington Post, wrote in his 1991 book, “[Edge City: Life on the New Frontier](#).”

Two key events steered Tysons in that direction.

Fifty years ago, Tysons was a rural crossroads marked by a general store and an Exxon station. Then, in 1961, the federal government completed construction of a headquarters facility for a new security outfit, the Central Intelligence Agency, in Langley, which is now part of McLean. Over the next generation, as the U.S. defense budget ballooned from \$381.5 billion in 1955 to \$713.2 billion in 2010 (in today’s dollars), contractors doing business with the CIA and the Pentagon began looking for office space nearby.

A year later, Fairfax County approved the plans of an up-and-coming developer named Theodore Lerner (who would go on to buy the Washington Nationals) to build a shopping mall. When it opened six years later, Lerner hailed Tysons Corner Center, featuring air conditioning, mechanized coat racks and decorative fountains, as one of the largest enclosed malls in the country. In its coverage of the opening, The Post listed every one of its 35 stores, which included the Hecht Co., Woodward & Lothrop and F.W. Woolworth.

Tysons quickly zipped along a path to becoming a regional shopping destination and a bastion of the “Beltway bandit” firms of the defense industry.

Real estate developers with land in Tysons entered a golden era. Gerald T. Halpin bought more than 100 acres in Tysons in 1962 and — with legendary land-use lawyer John T. “Til” Hazel at his side — his WestGroup firm got the green light to build two office parks, WestGate and WestPark. Defense contractors opened offices there; other developers followed suit; and the state and county expanded roads to meet the growing capacity.

Developer Stephen Cumbie founded his [real estate firm, NVCommercial](#), in 1983, when Tysons provided easy access to the malls, two airports and the District.

“It was a regional destination,” he said. “I mean, people were coming from Maryland and all points west, not only for their jobs but for the shopping.”

Tysons grew more specialized, catering to businessmen and luxury shoppers. Little housing was built; few people moved there, and many institutions that typically shape communities — parks, churches, schools, libraries and the like — simply never arrived.

When you step off the Silver Line in 2014, Tysons in all likelihood will still be a spectacle of imbalance, a place with the same number of Macy’s department stores (two) as grocery stores, where a glut of restaurants offer steak to the suit-and-tie crowd — the Palm, Fleming’s, Ruth’s Chris, Shula’s, Morton’s — but an apple can be hard to find.

### **Into a major city**



Can a major American city — a place of authenticity, culture and even grit — evolve out of a 50-year-old place built with none of that in mind? More than 20 years into planning, it is unclear. But paramount to that effort [will be sidewalks](#).

“In my view, it’s the quality of the pedestrian experience that makes people say, ‘I like this city; I like this place; I want to be here’ — or not, and they’ll say, ‘Oh, I hate Tysons.’ And it’s going to be one way or the other,” said Patrick L. Phillips, chief executive of the [Urban Land Institute](#).

Budget constraints and a sagging economy have undermined the plans, Phillips said, in ways that will be felt for decades.

“There was the concession that the rail would be aboveground, and then a concession that the [Dulles station would be aboveground](#),” he said. “And the fiscal realities are real, but these places are durable; they’re going to be around for a long time, and these decisions are important.

“I think it comes back to the issue of scale and the nature of public and private decisions and the big moves that shaped American cities, whether it’s the street grid in Manhattan or the Burnham plan in Chicago that shaped the parks and public places there. I mean, these are the big public investments that define these places.”

Retrofitting Tysons into an urban street grid is a challenge on a scale that urban planners and academics say they have never seen.

Rolf Pendall, director of the [Metropolitan Housing & Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute](#), said twisting the bones of Tysons into a grid will probably be more difficult and expensive than it was to build places such as Philadelphia and Manhattan from scratch.

“When you have streets and storm water and sewer and electric and all of the utilities and infrastructure you need to build 27 million square feet of office space in a suburban or even exurban area, turning that around is something new,” Pendall said. “It’s probably not quite as hard as turning around steel mills in Pittsburgh and Buffalo, because you don’t have the issues of toxic pollution, but it’s like a machine that was built for one thing. You have to repurpose it.”

To avoid building something resembling a monster Crystal City, officials and landowners also must provide for a street grid of small blocks, which will add to their cost. This will mean that the original developers of Tysons will need to rip up lots and buildings they painstakingly designed for a car culture a generation ago.

Cumbie, of NVCommercial, is attempting to navigate these issues on the ground right now. His company has proposed a 1.3 million-square-foot mixed-use project near the Tysons Central Metro stop.



“We’re starting at a difficult place because, creating a grid of streets in a place with as much development as Tysons has, it’s inevitable for the grid of streets to run into existing buildings,” he said. “Most places that have 25 million or more square feet of office space are 200 or more years old, and Tysons is only maybe 50 years old. So it does make it difficult.”

### ‘Santa Fe-ing of America’

With the Metro stations two to three years off, the city of Tysons Corner is starting to take shape. The new [Wal-Mart](#), for instance, will open inside an old parking garage — an adaptation of existing infrastructure that shows the chain’s interest in more urban design.

Private developers are pitching thousands of new apartment and condominium units and integrating their plans with parks, sidewalks and pedestrian connections to the Metro stations.

But some developers are not so focused on walkability.

Take Lerner, owner of 20 million square feet of real estate and estimated by Forbes to have a net worth of \$3 billion. His firm is sticking with its original plans, approved before the new guidelines came through, for an office building near a Metro stop. The county’s new blueprint for Tysons, [approved in 2010](#), encourages more density but requires builders to contribute to public amenities such as parks, fire stations and libraries.

Another Tysons landowner, the defense contractor Mitre, is proposing 1.4 million square feet of construction but appears to ignore walkability and mixed-use principles emphasized in the new plan.

And the largest property owner in Tysons, Cityline Partners, recently sued a neighbor, Capital One, in a possible attempt to prevent it from proceeding with a dense urban plan next door. Capital One countersued last month.

The jostling for position, however, also shows a fundamental strength that economic and real estate analysts say is likely to carry Tysons. Investors are aggressively seeking and signing deals there, said John Sikaitis, senior vice president for research at the brokerage firm [Jones Lang LaSalle](#), and spending millions of dollars on engineers, architects, lawyers and consultants to advance their plans.

Sikaitis said the federal government and its related industries have been such a dependable source of jobs and growth for the region that Washington — and Tysons in particular — has better long-term prospects than perhaps any other market in the country.

“You haven’t seen a lot of urbanized new cities pop up because the demographic shifts in patterns just aren’t there in the regions,” Sikaitis said. “D.C. actually has those demographic shifts that are promising for Tysons.”



But according to Garreau, the author, none of that will matter. He has new ideas about American communities in a post- "Edge City" world. They are based on the same fundamental theory: Civilizations form according to the day's optimal form of transportation.

"The state-of-the-art transportation device today is the automobile, the jet plane and the network computer," he said.

With broadband, employees no longer need to physically be transported to work. He sees Americans moving to scenic, ideal locations such as the mountains of Montana or the hills of Santa Fe. Garreau splits his time between Fauquier County and Arizona.

"What you're seeing now is what I call the Santa Fe-ing of the world, or the Santa Fe-ing of America," he said. "The fastest growth you're seeing is in small urban areas in beautiful places, because now you've got e-mail and Web and laptops and iPhones and all that jazz."

As that dynamic grows, Garreau said, face-to-face contact on the street is more critical than ever to the success of cities. He calls it "the one and only reason for cities in the future: face-to-face contact. Period. Full Stop."

"Are they good places for face-to-face contact?" he said. "Because if they are, they'll thrive. If they're not, they'll die."

Will Tysons get there? When you get off the Metro in 2014 — or 2024 or 2054 — you will know.

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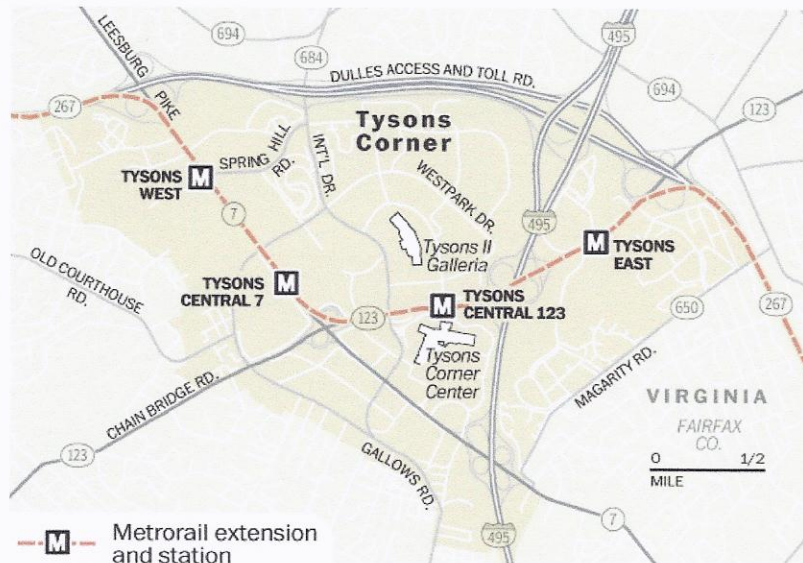
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